

# How FULL is your mind?

By Heiné de Waal – 24 March 2016

What does it mean to be mindful?

To be mindful does not mean the mind needs to be emptied from thoughts. This is not humanly possible, because we *always* have some thoughts going through our head...even if it is thinking about breathing or about mindfulness. <smile>.

It only means that we need to be AWARE of our thoughts, each and every moment as they come and go. It means we need to be aware of our emotions and the sensations in our bodies and how stimuli from our environment affect our thoughts, emotions and bodies. It is easy to make a conscious decision to be more aware of all those things. However, when it comes to our thoughts it is more challenging to be 100% aware of what we think and how it affects us.

We cannot control our thoughts, but we can choose which thoughts to believe as the truth. By default, most of us believe that ALL our thoughts are the absolute truth all the time. We then tell ourselves stories about our thoughts and we believe those stories to be true and valid.

That what we choose to accept as the truth, will become our beliefs. Hence the reason why it is important that we are AWARE of our beliefs and whether they are rational or not. There is no harm in having certain beliefs that are not rational as long as we are aware of them! This is being mindful.

More often than not our thoughts/beliefs are irrational and will have a negative impact on our lives. If we decide to make the effort to investigate our thoughts, we might soon discover how often they are not rational.

How do we know when our beliefs are irrational?

Here are a few questions that we can ask:

1. Does my belief help me in the long run?
2. Is my belief consistent with known facts?
3. Is my belief logical?
4. Is my belief flexible or rigid?
5. What am I preventing myself from doing with this belief?
6. Does holding this belief help my relationship(s)?
7. How awful can it really be to change?

8. Is there a possibility that I am kidding myself (with the story I am telling myself)?

Sometimes we get hurt due to certain experiences, especially when we had certain expectations. Then we subconsciously file those experiences as bad and create certain beliefs around it - beliefs that are not always rational. The mind only wants to protect itself from similar experiences that could cause hurt.

If we do it subconsciously, how can we then check if we might be doing it?

Foremost, our "emotional guidance system" will tell us that we are not 100% happy. At times we might feel emotionally down, anxious, irritated or even angry without any logical explanation.

Secondly, we can check how true we are to ourselves.

Here is another checklist of questions to check if we are harbouring some unresolved issues:

1. What am I trying to forget?
2. What am I missing in my life?
3. Where do I need support?
4. What do I want to do or say when no one is around?
5. Does my home feel like home?
6. What's bothering me the most?
7. Which parts of myself do I not accept?
8. What is it that I refuse to admit/acknowledge about myself?
9. Have I been listening to others at the expense of my own voice?
10. Am I treating my body with respect?
11. What would I like my life to look like?
12. What needs or dreams have I been afraid to say out loud?

The less mindful we live, the more unconscious we become in what we do and the choices we make. The more mindful we live, the more we become aware of things which are causing us misery or harm. Once we are aware of something, then we can own the situation and change it. This has a progressive effect; we will become even more mindful, which means we will become even more conscious of how our thoughts affect us.

The more aware we are the more spiritually connected we become and the better we could know what choices we need to make that are better for us. In other words, we will be aware of who we truly are, what we really need and how much we value ourselves. That will help us to prevent any emotional self-harm. We could see the world in a totally different way. We could develop compassion and understanding for other's suffering. We could develop more gratitude and serenity in what we have. We will be joyful!

There are many exercises or techniques such as yoga and meditation which we can practise to help us becoming more mindful. Ultimately it is the mind that needs to change - and if you change your mind then you can change your life.

At the end of the day we all just want to be happy. There are many external things such as shopping, work, addictions and sex that can make us happy...well, for a while. However, joy comes from the inside and will sustain us much longer. Living a more mindful life will create more joy and without relying on external stimuli to find happiness.

If I may share a secret...the Universe is not really interested in our happiness, only in our spiritual growth. It is our own responsibility to make that choice to find joy.

*If you change your mind, then you can change your life.*